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*Afghanistan  
and the  
Reagan Doctrine*

by

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIG	Afghan Interim Government
CENTCOM	Central Command
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense, United States
DoS	Department of State, United States
GNP	Gross National Product
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence, Pakistan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
NSDD	National Security Decision Directive
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PRC	People's Republic of China
RDF	Rapid Deployment Force
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty
SAM	surface-to-air missile
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republic

## AFGHANISTAN AND THE REAGAN DOCTRINE

### INTRODUCTION

Historically, the United States (US) interest in Afghanistan has been ambivalent at best. Stretching back to the administration of Eisenhower, successive executives had declined to define a US political or strategic interest in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> This changed in December 1979. While Americans were preparing to celebrate the last Christmas of the decade, the United Soviet Socialist Republic's (USSR) Red Army surged across Afghanistan's northern boarder at the "request" of the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The PDPA's coup a year before of the former government in Kabul had gone with ~~bare~~ <sup>bare</sup> recognition by President Jimmy Carter and national security team who were reeling from other national security problems earlier in 1979 such as the Iranian Revolution and the American hostages held in Teheran.<sup>2</sup>

### Historical Precedents

From the Communist victory in Vietnam until the invasion of Afghanistan, the Soviet empire absorbed ten countries: an average of one every six months. By mid-1979, commentators across party lines were calling this sequence of events "America in Retreat."<sup>3</sup> This burst of Soviet expansion, fed by America's failure in Vietnam, was underscored by an enormous and offensive-oriented military build-up. By 1979, USSR military spending was estimated at 12-14 percent of their GNP—up 70 percent more in dollar terms than US defense spending.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the appearance of the global strategic landscape looked grim with a wave of newly declared Marxist states appearing giving the appearance of democracy under siege as the communist juggernaut consumed the world.<sup>5</sup> By the beginning of the 1980s, "Soviet leaders stated with growing confidence that the correlation of forces had shifted in their favor."<sup>6</sup> Most troubling of all was the invasion's strong psychological impact to US decision makers, given its echo of the events, which began the Cold War some 25 years ago in 1979.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Scott, James M. *Deciding to Intervene: The Reagan Doctrine and American Foreign Policy* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996): 40.

<sup>2</sup> Oye, Kenneth A., et al, editors. *Eagle Resurgent?* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1987): 434.

<sup>3</sup> Wattenberg, Ben J. *New York Times Magazine*, July 22, 1979: 14-16.

<sup>4</sup> Busch, Andrew E. *Ronald Reagan and the Defeat of the Soviet Empire* (Denver, Colorado: University of Denver, 1999): 2; (<http://www.cspresidency.org/busch.htm>).

<sup>5</sup> Hyland, William G. editor. *The Reagan Foreign Policy* (New York: Meridian Books of NAL Penguin, Inc., 1987): 204. These countries included South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, South Yemen, Nicaragua, Grenada, Suriname as well as Afghanistan.

<sup>6</sup> Nitze, Paul H. "Strategy in the Decade of the 1980s," *Foreign Affairs* (Fall 1980): 86.

<sup>7</sup> Oye, 436.



## U.S. POLICY AND THE REAGAN DOCTRINE

The Reagan Doctrine<sup>8</sup> was actually applied in Afghanistan over three presidential administrations, since aid began in the Carter Administration and ended in the Bush Administration. President Carter made the decision to arm the Afghan rebel groups— or mujaheddin— which presented the Reagan Administration with an existing policy that fit the predisposition of many of its policy makers and enjoyed broad support from Congress and the public. The United States continued to assist the Afghan rebels, pursued a diplomatic settlement, and watched the Soviet Union withdraw in early 1989. In spite of this success, the Reagan Doctrine was extended until 1991 to help the rebels remove the regime that Moscow left in power when it withdrew. That aspect of the policy was unsuccessful and, interestingly, triggered a serious policy debate.

## INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

As had been the case since 1948, looming over all U.S. foreign policy decisions during the Soviet-Afghan War was the specter of the Cold War— an environment the Reagan Doctrine was created to confront. However, aiding the mujaheddin against the Soviet's was not Reagan's sole concern. There were several US foreign policy balls to juggle. Likewise, concerning Afghanistan, the US had to monitor involvement from many other regional and non-regional actors with some stake in the outcome of the <sup>Afghans</sup> Afghans. Finally, Reagan's foreign policy team had to account for and weave together many of its past policies, formal and informal commitments, and the pleas of several US allies in the Middle East.

Many saw the USSR's actions in Afghanistan as the first steps in a master plan toward securing access to Persian Gulf oil and warm water ports in the Indian Ocean. More foreboding was the realization that these actions marked the first time since the end of World War II that the Soviets had projected military force beyond their borders with the exception of their hegemonic clients of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>9</sup> However, other Western analysts note that Moscow's regional goals reflected nothing more than a natural self-interest in the political stability of a state on its immediate borders. Further, the primary goal of the USSR "was to prevent the region from becoming a safe asset for the West in its policy of encircling the Soviet Union."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> A name coined by columnist Charles Krauthammer in an effort to give a coherent description of Reagan foreign policy.

<sup>9</sup> Palmer, Michael A. *Guardians of The Gulf: A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833-1992* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1992): 104.

<sup>10</sup> Hadar, Leon T. *Quagmire: America in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C.: The Caro Institute, 1992): 48. A remark was made by the diplomat and historian George Kennan.

## Contemporary Events

During this period, President Reagan and his national security team had plenty of diversionary crises to attend to besides the situation in Afghanistan; however, it was Afghanistan that resonated most clearly the central themes of the Reagan Doctrine.<sup>11</sup> These include the Iran-Iraq War, 1980-88; the US invasion and liberation of Grenada, 1983<sup>12</sup>; US aid to freedom fighters in Nicaragua, Angola, Cambodia, and— to a lesser extent— Mozambique; as well as numerous state-sponsored terrorist incidents through the 1980s.<sup>13</sup>

*Table 1. UN General Assembly Voting Patterns on Withdrawal of Foreign Troops from Afghanistan<sup>14</sup>*

Date	Votes for	Votes against	Abstentions
Jan-80	104	18	18
Nov-80	111	22	12
Nov-81	116	23	12
Nov-82	114	21	13
Nov-83	116	20	17
Nov-84	119	20	14

Unquestionably, Moscow underestimated the extent and depth of the international reaction to the Red Army's intervention in Afghanistan— especially in by the US. Washington had gained an international reputation for vacillation in its foreign policy. The responses from the US and NATO were likely anticipated by the Kremlin prior to its decision to invade.<sup>15</sup> What was more shocking was the reaction of the Third World. The initial UN General Assembly votes on a resolution calling for Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan was the worst defeat it had suffered since the Korean War. Furthermore, the sustainment and growth of international moral condemnation severely strained Moscow's fragile image of prestige (see Table 1).<sup>16</sup> Soviet positions in the Islamic world were also damaged illustrated by the boycott of most leading Muslim countries of an international Islamic conference held in Tashkent in September 1980.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The exception perhaps being Lebanon, in which US security objectives seem confused and distant from Reagan Doctrine principles.

<sup>12</sup> The invasion of Grenada represented the first time that a Communist country was liberated by US troops and the first major use of force by the US since Vietnam. The strategic and psychological balance in the Caribbean was altered favorably, and for the first time in recent memory, it was more dangerous to be America's enemy than her friend.

<sup>13</sup> Such as Operation ELDORADO CANYON taken against Libya's connection to the deaths of US service members in a German disco bombing; the Marine Barracks bombing in Lebanon, 1983; and the Pan AM 103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland in Dec 1988.

<sup>14</sup> Day, Arthur R. and Doyle, Michael W., editors. *Escalation and Intervention* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1986): 114.

<sup>15</sup> Bradsher, Henry S. *Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, New and Expanded Edition* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1985): 199.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold, Anthony. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective, revised and Enlarged Edition* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1985): 113-116; Day, 114.

<sup>17</sup> Bradsher, 200.



## US non-regional allies involvement

The operation of the program involved several other countries. Chinese weapons, particularly rockets and antiaircraft guns, were made available to the mujaheddin in large quantities. They were more effective for guerrilla operations than the heavier and more expensive Western arms and could be more efficiently supplement captured Soviet weapons since parts and ammunition, in most cases, were interchangeable.<sup>18</sup> In like fashion, the Egyptians also agreed to supply weapons taken from its own armory—though at times of questionable serviceability—to provide to the mujaheddin.<sup>19</sup> Cairo also became an important conduit for funneling US weaponry provided by the CIA for eventual delivery to Pakistan and then the rebels. In addition, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other Persian Gulf states provided assistance—though mainly financial. The most important and active support came from Pakistan, which provided operational control, direct assistance, and “plausible deniability”<sup>20</sup>.

## POLICY FORMULATION

United States foreign policy response to the 1979 Soviets military intervention in Afghanistan evolved slowly over the span of three presidential administrations spanning a total of 14 years.<sup>21</sup> Mention of significant policy decisions will be discussed in the policy implementation to follow later. Here I would simply like to make a synopsis of the Reagan Doctrine policy in general with specific implications for Afghanistan.

The Reagan Doctrine had three objectives. In the short term, aid to resistance forces could blunt Soviet advances by forcing the Soviets and their allies onto the defensive, and could deter future Soviet adventurism by making it clear that they would incur heavy resistance. In the medium term, the key objective was to prevail in one or more of the countries. Such a victory would demonstrate that “communism is not, as the Soviets propagate, the wave of the future,” and that communist rule, once installed, is reversible.”<sup>22</sup> Finally, the long-term objective was to use a series of

<sup>18</sup> Farr, Grant M. and Merriam, John G., editors, *Afghan Resistance: The Politics of Survival* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1987): 74.

<sup>19</sup> Yousaf, Mohammad and Adkin, Mark, *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan's Unfold Story* (Lahore, Pakistan: Jang Publishers, 1992): 84; Farr, 76-77. Egypt's early contributions were made up of old Soviet military aide items received from 1956-1972.

<sup>20</sup> Yousaf, 82, 84; Farr, 93-95.

<sup>21</sup> Magnus, Ralph H. and Naby, Eden, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, A Member of Persus Books, L.L.C., 1998): 136; Spiegel, Steven L., Heller, Mark A. and Goldberg, Jacob, editors, *The Soviet-American Competition in the Middle East* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1988): 125.

<sup>22</sup> Bode, William R. “The Reagan Doctrine,” *Strategic Review* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1986): 26.



such successes to achieve a secure peace by ultimately prevailing over the Soviet's "evil empire." Originally enunciated in January 1983 in NSDD-75<sup>23</sup>, Reagan reiterated this vision in 1987 when he said:

*"Our goal has been to break the deadlock of the past, to seek a forward strategy—a forward strategy for world peace, a forward strategy for world freedom. . . the forces of freedom grow steadily in strength, and they put ever greater pressure on the forces of totalitarianism."*<sup>24</sup>

At the time many critics observed that this new policy could not be implemented without impinging on traditional notions of state sovereignty, while others focused on the real or perceived shortcomings of the "freedom fighters" we were aiding. Finally, critics had two fears concerning the Reagan Doctrine in Afghanistan. First, if inadequate support was provided to the rebels then the policy would fail, leading to further bloodshed on all sides. Second, if enough support was given that the rebels actually threaten the Soviets and their puppet regime then this might provoke a dangerous confrontation between the US and the USSR.<sup>25</sup> However, in hindsight we can see that the Reagan Doctrine was a success in achieving the three broad goals stated previously—especially as it pertains to Afghanistan. By 1988, the Kremlin had agreed to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. Two key policy decisions contributed to this victory. One was the decision made by Reagan in 1986, over the objections of many advisers, to supply the Stinger anti-aircraft missile to the resistance. According to a later Army report, the Stinger decision "tipped the balance" against the Soviets.<sup>26</sup> The second key decision was even riskier, but raised the price to the Soviets—which was already considerable—beyond their willingness to pay by secretly aiding mujaheddin military and political operations across the Soviet border in Soviet Central Asia starting in 1986.

## POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Carter Administration responded to the April 1978 coup in Afghanistan with wariness, but not hostility. Carter's team recognized that the coup leaders were leftist and pro-Soviet, but decided that severing diplomatic ties "would only reduce Afghan options and drive the Afghan government deeper into the Soviet embrace."<sup>27</sup>

Widespread rebellion in Afghanistan in early 1979, as well as evidence of Afghanistan's Soviet leanings, radical reforms, repression, and the kidnapping and murder of US Ambassador Adolph Dubbs finally prompted President

<sup>23</sup> Simpson, Christopher, *National Security Directives of the Reagan & Bush Administrations: The Declassified History of U.S. Political and Military Policy, 1981-1991* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1995): 227.

<sup>24</sup> Reagan, Ronald, "Remarks," Town Hall of California, August 26, 1987, *Administration of Ronald Reagan*, 1987 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1988): 966.

<sup>25</sup> Busch, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Cooley, John K., *Payback: America's Long War in the Middle East* (McLean, Virginia: Brassey's (US), Inc., 1991): 148-149.

<sup>27</sup> Carter, Jimmy, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982): 224.

Carter to finally respond.<sup>28</sup> In April 1979, it was proposed that the US be more sympathetic to those in Afghanistan committed to preserve the country's independence. President Carter signed a presidential finding in July 1979 that started a small program of non-lethal aid—propaganda and medical assistance—to rebels.<sup>29</sup> In general, Washington's policy posture toward Moscow up to this point had been overly accommodating with little flexibility lest it upset the US-USSR Détente card. Paradoxically, the invasion actually widened US policy options since the precedent of intervention had been set by the Soviet's unprovoked attack. Thus the basic problem was no longer whether to help, but exactly how to help.<sup>30</sup>

#### Prologue: Carter and His Doctrine, 1979-1980

The ensuing Soviet invasion prompted the next steps. Alarmed at apparent Soviet expansionism, Carter and most of his top advisors interpreted the Soviet action as a major threat to US interests.<sup>31</sup> American support for the resistance accelerated, accompanied by several public policy actions involving the executive branch and Congress. Responding to what Brzezinski characterized as “a major watershed... in the American-Soviet relationship,”<sup>32</sup> The Carter administration and Congress reached a new consensus: the Soviet Union must pay for its deeds.

Publicly, the revised approach took two forms. First, the administration and Congress stepped up their condemnation of Soviet actions. President Carter described the Soviet move as a “grave threat to peace,” an “extremely serious threat to peace,” and “the greatest threat to peace since World War II.”<sup>33</sup> In addition, Carter sent a sharp message to Brezhnev warning that the Soviet invasion “could mark a fundamental and long-lasting turning point in (US-USSR) relations.”<sup>34</sup> Finally, on January 23, 1980, President Carter delivered his *State of the Union Address* with his Carter Doctrine, warning of the serious implications of the Soviet invasion and stating that “verbal condemnation is not enough. The Soviet Union must pay a price for their aggression.”<sup>35</sup>

Several actions were put into motion in reaction to these events. Carter enacted sanctions to punish the USSR, including: delaying the SALT II ratification, canceling grain sales, restricting trade severely, curtailing Soviet fishing

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<sup>28</sup> Arnold, 79.

<sup>29</sup> Bonner, Arthur, *Among the Afghans* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1987): 46.

<sup>30</sup> Arnold, 136.

<sup>31</sup> Magnus, Ralph H., editor, *Afghan Alternatives: Issues, Options, and Policies* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction, Inc., 1985): 155.

<sup>32</sup> Palmer, 101.

<sup>33</sup> Carter, 471.

<sup>34</sup> Carter, 472.

<sup>35</sup> Carter, 472.



privileges in US waters, boycotting the 1980 Olympics Games being held in Moscow, and recalling (for consultations) the US Ambassador in Moscow.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, Carter committed to provide Pakistan with more military and other assistance to strengthen its defenses; requested an increase in American defense spending, especially to create a force capable of rapid deployment to the Persian Gulf; and announced its intention to increase security cooperation with the PRC and to expand the sale of military technology. The Pentagon deployed expeditionary forces to the area, accelerated the US naval buildup in the Indian Ocean at Diego Garcia and operations that included bomber flights over Soviet vessels.<sup>37</sup> And lastly, Carter authorized implementation of the long debated RDF, forerunner to CENTCOM, designed to protect US vital national security interests in and around the Persian Gulf region.<sup>38</sup>

Most important, the Carter Administration expanded its small covert aid program for the resistance. Brzezinski noted that “plans were made to further enhance (US) cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Egypt regarding Afghanistan.”<sup>39</sup> In fact, just days after the Soviet invasion, Carter signed a new presidential finding on covert action appropriating approximately \$30 million to supply lethal weapons to the mujaheddin (through the Pakistani authorities) for the purpose of harassing the Soviet occupation forces in Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup> Although first shipments consisted mainly of antiquated 303 Enfield rifles, the first arriving just 14 days after the Soviet invasion, this finding remained operational until March 1985, designed primarily to harass Soviet forces. No analysts dared dream that the mujaheddin could actually drive a modern superpower from Afghanistan.

While Carter had brought a dramatic redirection in US Middle East policy, setting in motion the political and military groundwork necessary to support the new doctrine, it was left to his successor—Ronald Reagan—to sustain and transform the policy after 1980.<sup>41</sup>

### Phase I: The Reagan Doctrine Cometh, 1981-1984

Despite a desire to break cleanly with the policies of Carter when Reagan took office in January 1981, he did little to substantially change security policies regarding Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, Reagan faced no need to and lobby

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<sup>36</sup> Magnus, *Afghanistan*, 155; Arnold 113-114, Bradsher, 194-196. These sanctions were probably practiced by Moscow except the Olympics boycott which, when joined by other NATO countries, delivered a severe blow to Soviet prestige.

<sup>37</sup> Bonner, 46-47.

<sup>38</sup> Kupchan, Charles A. *The Persian Gulf and the West: The Dilemmas of Security* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987) 99-101.

<sup>39</sup> Scott, 119.

<sup>40</sup> Kakar, M. Hassan. *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1995): 148, Yousaf, 82.

Congress for agreement to this policy. Congress was already in agreement that US aid was necessary. Debate over the next eight years would only focus the level and type of aid to be provided to the Afghan rebels. In addition, Reagan expanded upon Carter's diplomatic efforts, creating new pressures utilizing diplomacy and publicity to convince Moscow to end its occupation of Afghanistan.

### *Reagan Doctrine and Aid to the Mujaheddin.*

Building on the existing Carter administration program the first phase of the application of the Reagan Doctrine in Afghanistan was characterized by steadily increasing funding levels, beginning in October 1982. Decisions were made on three occasions to increase the quantity and quality of the weapons provided to the mujaheddin. The first was made by the administration but came as a result of prodding from Congress; while the next two increases supplementing Reagan's budget request—of \$40 million in 1983 and 1984—occurred primarily because of the efforts of several congressional leaders.<sup>43</sup>

Due to Reagan's decentralized style of governing, the roles played by his top advisors weighed heavily on US policy toward Afghanistan. Reagan's key aides early on included DoD Secretary Casper Weinberger, DoS Secretary George Shultz, and CIA Director William Casey. Weinberger and Shultz were divergent on most issues including Afghanistan, which made US policy statements seem disjointed and contradictory over this period.<sup>44</sup> Casey recognized that Afghanistan offered a major opportunity for the US to engage the Soviet Union and make them "pay in blood" for the losses America had suffered in Vietnam.<sup>45</sup> During these first years, three factors seem to have been especially important in the decision to maintain the limited nature of the program. First, many US and Pakistani officials feared that greater involvement would provoke the Soviet Union into attacking Pakistan. Second, American officials did not want to allow US equipment to be used in Afghanistan for fear of a larger Soviet response. Many in the Reagan administration, especially in the DoD, were very anxious about providing American weapons for fear that they would be captured by the Soviets or sold to hostile forces in the Middle East.<sup>46</sup> Third, many officials seem to have been certain that the mujaheddin could not win, and this prompted a reluctance to expand the program. In 1983, William Casey

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<sup>43</sup> Palmer, 112.

<sup>44</sup> Kupchan, 137.

<sup>45</sup> Simpson, 446; Hyland, 210-211.

<sup>46</sup> Woodward, Bob. *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987): 254.

<sup>45</sup> Cordovez, Diego and Harrison, Selig S. *Qia of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 158.

<sup>46</sup> Scott, 220. A fear that would prove prophetic.



himself said that “the Soviets will overpower and wear down the rebels.”<sup>47</sup> Echoing this sentiment, Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyoming) stated in 1985, “I don’t know anyone who believes that we will overthrow the Soviet-supported regime in Afghanistan.”<sup>48</sup>

With these three points in mind, the program proceeded in 1981 and 1982 on a limited basis with covert support estimated at approximately \$30-40 million.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, several other countries provided additional assistance, facilities, and operational supervision such as China, Pakistan, Britain, and Saudi Arabia. The US, through the CIA, provided funds and some weapons and generally supervised support for the mujaheddin globally; however, daily operations needs were handled by the Pakistani’s ISI agency. The PRC sold weapons to the CIA and also donated some small amounts directly to Pakistan. Saudi Arabia matched US funding to the rebels while others, like Egypt, supplied *Israel who supplied captured Soviet weapons*, second-hand Soviet weaponry (though sometimes of questionable quality).<sup>50</sup> The US side of this effort was run solely by the CIA, growing into the largest covert operation ever conducted by the agency. The CIA trained Pakistani instructors who then trained the rebel forces. Pakistan’s ISI maintained on-site operational control, determining what and how much equipment was required (see Figure 1).<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Woodward, 136

<sup>48</sup> Busch, 7

<sup>49</sup> Simpson, 446-47

<sup>50</sup> Yousaf, 84-5

<sup>51</sup> Yousaf, 82

Early in 1985, intelligence indicated that the Soviet Union leadership was preparing to escalate the intensity of its war in Afghanistan in order to exterminate the effectiveness of the Afghan rebels. This information prompted senior Washington officials that a matching increase in the US aide operations was required to offset the Soviets and President Reagan himself instructed his advisors to develop an expanded application of the Reagan Doctrine to ensure Soviet defeat.

In April 1985, Reagan signed an order giving high priority to focus US policy on the removal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Author George Lenczowski summarizes the actions taken by Reagan's foreign policy team as follows<sup>53</sup>:

- 1.) *Devote substantial funds to assist Afghan mujaheddin*
- 2.) *Substantially increase amount and quality of arms and equipment to the rebels*
- 3.) *Create parallel effort to provide appropriate means to transport these new weapons through Pakistan to the battle zones of Afghanistan*
- 4.) *Foster continued cooperation and aid from non-regional states to support the mujaheddin freedom fighters*

Secretary Shultz stated that "with Bill Casey pushing hard and with me in full agreement, the President stepped up sharply our level of assistance to the mujaheddin."<sup>54</sup> Reagan signed a new NSDD-166 authorizing increased aid to the rebels<sup>55</sup>. This directive called for efforts to compel Soviets forces to withdrawal from Afghanistan "by all means possible,"<sup>56</sup> thus changing the American policy objective from making the Soviets pay a price for their invasion to making them leave Afghanistan. Covert action was tailored to meet this new objective of victory vice harassment by supplying better weapons, expanded intelligence (to include overhead imagery) and leading the way on stepped up international pressures directed at Moscow. Afghanistan had become an open wound for the Soviets which US policy makers wanted to continue to bleed.<sup>57</sup> Other men, like Weinberger, continued to balk at the use of US resources in what might precipitate a direct engagement of the Soviets. He developed his now quoted "Weinberger Doctrine" during this time which, although dealing with the commitment of US military forces, had some extrapolation

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<sup>53</sup> Lenczowski, 227

<sup>54</sup> Lenczowski, George *American Presidents and the Middle East* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1990) 227

<sup>55</sup> Shultz, George "America and the Struggle of Freedom," address to the Commonwealth Club of California, San Francisco, February 22, 1985, pp. 2-4, 1,087 (*Lexus-Nexus*)

<sup>56</sup> Simpson, 446-447

<sup>57</sup> Simpson, 446.

<sup>58</sup> Magnus, *Afghanistan Alternatives*, 112, Woodward, 316.

to the resourcing of proxy fighters like the mujaheddin. In the administration debate, Shultz's argument that "inaction" in US foreign policy might be just as likely to force military commitments later on than action now.<sup>58</sup>

All of these changes significantly changed America's role in the war. The number and frequency of CIA and Special Forces assistance visits to Pakistan increased dramatically providing more advanced communications, battlefield intelligence, and training.<sup>59</sup> Finally, funding was substantially increased over a two-year period. Thus the US redefined its application of the Reagan Doctrine and took steps to improve the capacity of the rebels to fight the Soviets. This escalation of US policy coincided with Moscow's decision to escalate operations in order to nullify any battlefield gains they might have hoped for.

The second significant policy reformulation of the covert program occurred in 1986 with the decision to authorize supplying the Afghan resistance with hand-held Stinger surface-to-air missiles (SAM).<sup>60</sup> These weapons had been held from the mujaheddin up until now because of their appearance in Afghanistan might remove the veneer of "plausible deniability" of US involvement with the rebels. Likewise, its capture on the battlefield by the USSR would compromise a sophisticated weapon, which was still standard issue for American defense forces.<sup>61</sup>

Several on Reagan's foreign policy team were at odds over this new policy change. Weinberger and others in the Pentagon were anxious about releasing such an advanced weapon into the Third World;<sup>62</sup> despite the fact that Stinger SAMs supplied to US forces were already three modifications ahead of this earlier version which was in fact being phased out of production by the manufacturer.<sup>63</sup> Shultz wanted to support it but was more concerned with the loss of our "plausible deniability" in aiding the mujaheddin and the ramifications to Cold War politics should the Soviets obtain physical evidence of Stingers use on the Afghan battlefields.<sup>64</sup> Casey, however, strongly supported Stinger deliveries and as one of the strongest proponents—and in many ways architects of the Reagan Doctrine—won Reagan's support of the idea. It certainly showed the Congressional hawks that the administration was empathetic with their strongly stated desires to keep aid increasing to support the mujaheddin.

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<sup>58</sup> Shultz, George. Address to the Trilateral Commission, 3 April 1984. Mentioned in Gacek, Christopher Mark. *Contending Approaches to the Use of Force*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microforms, Inc., 1989:407

<sup>59</sup> Yousaf, 84

<sup>60</sup> Lenczowski, 227

<sup>61</sup> Cooley, *Unholy War* 119

<sup>62</sup> Cordovez, 195

<sup>63</sup> Cooley, John K. *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 1999) 113, Woodward, 306

Pakistan's President Zia, agreed to this new introduction on the condition that the first 100 Stingers supplied were provided to Pakistan's military. By June of 1986, Pakistani officers received US training in Stinger missile use and returned to Pakistan to establish camps to train the mujaheddin. By September 1986, rebel Stinger teams went into operation having an immediate effect on Soviet operations—especially helicopter mobility that was the linchpin of their operational escalation against the rebels. Soon the Soviets were losing at least one aircraft per day, denying them the ability to gain air dominance over Afghanistan. On the heels of these reports, American aid increased again in 1986 and 1987, peaking at about \$500 million.<sup>65</sup>

So, the decision to provide Stinger missiles to the mujaheddin was primarily an Executive Branch act, as was the decision to expand the covert program a few years before. Congress was involved in several minor but important ways and exerted consistent background pressure for a strong Reagan policy.<sup>66</sup> Congress also contributed through its efforts to expand the overt side the Reagan Doctrine application. Although the administration would not go so far as to recognize the Islamic Unity of Afghan organization as the legitimate government as some Congressional leaders desired, Reagan did relent to Congress' insistence that an overt economic and humanitarian assistance program for the people of Afghanistan. Although disputed by some historians, the decision to supply Stingers to the mujaheddin has been viewed by some Reagan Doctrine proponents as a turning point in the Afghan conflict.<sup>67</sup>

Concurrent to these activities, Washington was cooperating with the UN-led negotiations between the USSR and Afghanistan to reach a political settlement that would see a Soviet withdrawal of troops. The Shultz's DoS was the principal Administration actor in this effort, sharing policy-making responsibility with other key administration elements as well as the Congress. By now both Moscow and the international community were in agreement (albeit unknown to the larger party) that a Soviet withdrawal would occur; however, it was the timetable under which it would occur which became hotly disputed. After much diplomatic wrangling, Gorbachev finally made the public commitment in February 1988 to Soviet troop withdrawal by May 15, 1988.<sup>68</sup> Also, Gorbachev announced that Moscow was disinterested in

<sup>64</sup> The CIA obtained British compliance to provide their hand-held Blouptape antiaircraft missile in hopes of confusing the issue; however, this seems like a half-hearted effort to cover-up US involvement since in the Cold War paradigm the Soviets viewed the United Kingdom as clients of the US.

<sup>65</sup> Scott, 62. Largely the cost of the Stinger missiles

<sup>66</sup> Scott, 63

<sup>67</sup> Many believe the Soviets had been looking for a way to withdrawal from Afghanistan prior to the introduction of the Stinger to the battlefield. They note that although it forced a change in some tactical airborne operations, the USSR still maintained relative dominance over the airspace in Afghanistan.

<sup>68</sup> Scott, 67

They obtained these from Nigeria at first with UK agreement.



helping Afghanistan's interim regime (thus removing themselves from that political discussion) and that they expected all outside aid to the rebels to stop, affording Soviet troops a chance to leave unmolested.<sup>69</sup> The administration had already agreed in secret to several of these stipulations; however, broad opposition in the Congress—especially the Senate—objected strenuously to this new policy, calling it a “sell out” of the resistance, forcing an administration position change. US aid to the mujaheddin would continue, but would respond in kind to suspension of Soviet aid to the puppet communist regime of the PDPA.<sup>70</sup> Gorbachev finally agreed on April 7, 1988 and one week later, on April 14<sup>th</sup>, the Geneva Accords were signed: Soviet withdrawals would begin on May 15, 1988 and be completed by February 15, 1989.<sup>71</sup>

The Reagan Doctrine had succeed in achieving a goal which most analysts and policy makers had believed impossible just eight years prior. But the celebration was quickly marred by several subsequent events. First, almost immediately US political consensus unraveled with attacks against Reagan's team of betraying the Afghan freedom fighters. Second, American hopes of Soviet restraint in its military aid to the PDPA proved fleeting. Moscow continued substantial military aid throughout 1988 and into the Bush administration. Furthermore, the rebels failure to create a viable government coupled with their condemnation of the 1988 Geneva Accords and Reagan soured what was expected to be a decisive American foreign policy victory.<sup>72</sup>

In short, while the United States achieved its chief objective of Soviet harassment and withdrawal, the other goals specified by Carter and Reagan were not attained. The communist PDPA remained in power with continued Soviet support. Reagan *Doctrines* continued to apply this policy after Soviet withdrawal but it never achieved the same success. Without the focus of a foreign enemy, the mujaheddin factionalized attacking elements of itself as much as the PDPA. Within the dynamic of civil war the Reagan Doctrine was not as affective at rolling back the communists as it had been.

### Phase III: Bush, the Reagan Doctrine, and Terminations, 1989-1991

In spite of the Soviet withdrawal, US support to Afghanistan continued well into the Bush administration. American policy during this time had two key characteristics. First, Bush continued the Reagan legacy of aid to the

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<sup>69</sup> Vitas, Robert A. and Williams, John Allen. *U.S. National Security Policy and Strategy, 1987-1994* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996) 56

<sup>70</sup> Lenczowski, 232.

<sup>71</sup> Saikal, Arun and Maley, William, editors. *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 12-13

rebels, funneled through Pakistan in order to replace the PDPA. Second, the absence of Soviet direct occupation in Afghanistan, coupled with the Afghan's spiraling into civil war, fueled significant debate over the continued merits of the Reagan Doctrine's use. Despite these changes, Bush kept the Reagan Doctrine policy in effect for several years.

In 1989, Bush officials stated US goals as the same in Afghanistan citing self-determination, return of refugees, sovereignty and independence. Bush focused his policy primarily on the AIG government in exile (created in February 1989) but internecine fighting among the exile leaders and mujaheddin commanders proved an obstacle to anything sustainable being achieved.

Ultimately, three developments combined to force the abandonment of the Reagan Doctrine in Afghanistan. First, the likelihood of political unification the rebels seemed more and more remote. Although Bush tried to focus on the AIG when local mujaheddin factions had begun attacking each other; rivalries for leadership within this organization rendered it useless to American foreign policy goals. Second, the Gulf War of 1990-91, putting Iraq against the U.S.-led Coalition, diverted attention from Afghanistan but also revealed another problem. It seemed that the mujaheddin faction most heavily financed by covert American funds was siding with Iraq against the United States.<sup>73</sup> Finally, Moscow's cooperation with the West during the Gulf War, coupled with the failed Soviet hard-liner coup in August 1991 and the end of the Cold War, prompted agreement to end American aid to the rebels. This brought to an end almost twelve years of application of the Reagan Doctrine in Afghanistan.<sup>74</sup>

## EVALUATION

Before concluding I would like to discuss the impact of the Reagan Doctrine, whether it solved the foreign policy crisis it was applied too, and some unintended consequences of this policy tact.

### The Impact of the Reagan Doctrine

The Reagan Doctrine made three concrete contributions to the achievement of broad US foreign policy goals. First the rhetoric of the doctrine proved to be an important component of broad US foreign policy. In foreign policy declarations are often as significant as actions. Moscow recognized that the declaration of the Reagan Doctrine

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<sup>73</sup> Vitas, 65; Scott, 73

<sup>74</sup> Scott, 76. *Apparently, the Afghan Islamic groups hated the United States just as much as they did the Soviet Union.*

<sup>75</sup> Saikal, 156-7.

indicated the likelihood of increasing costs to their general strategy of communist expansion— and the costs associated with regards to Afghanistan were real and heavy in regards to reputation, prestige, resources, and lives. Secondly, the application of the Reagan Doctrine to the Afghanistan situation was a vital cog in a broader effort designed to moderate Soviet global policies. Of the several Reagan Doctrine foreign policy crises of the 1980s, Afghanistan especially was viewed by administration officials as a critical element in their broad strategic offensive against Moscow.<sup>75</sup> Success in Afghanistan precipitated breakthroughs in Cambodia and Angola and very likely contributed to the Soviet foreign policy redirection instituted by Gorbachev. Finally, although it failed in actually replacing the communist puppet government in Kabul, analysis of the application of the Reagan Doctrine to Afghanistan indicates that its component of coercive diplomacy contributed to the eventual Soviet troop withdrawals by forcing restraint upon Soviet foreign policy behavior.<sup>76</sup>

### Did It Solve the Problem?

The Reagan Doctrine had its greatest success in Afghanistan. American assistance to the rebels was an important factor in the defeat of the Soviet Union and its subsequent decision to withdraw. Credit for this success goes to virtually the entire US foreign policy community. As the preceding analysis shows, policy makers from the White House, the foreign policy bureaucracy, and Congress agreed on the general purposes of US policy; until the Soviet withdrawal, the only debate was over how best to aid the rebels. With support from public opinion and certain interest groups, US policy makers implemented a surprisingly effective and timely aid program built on a consensus that lasted from the end of the Carter administration to the beginning of the Bush administration.

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<sup>75</sup> Which also included economic, military, propaganda and other pressures.

<sup>76</sup> Scott, 221-2

*Table 2. Chronology of Aid to the Mujaheddin under the Reagan Doctrine.*

Reagan Doctrine	Year	Amount	Remarks
<b>Prologue</b>	1980	\$20-30	Covert aid
<b>Phase I</b>	1981	\$30	Covert aid
	1982	\$40	Aid increased
	1983	\$80	Aid increased
	1984	\$130	Aid increased
<b>Phase II</b>	1985	\$450	Aid increased
	1986	\$500	Aid increased
	1987	\$500	Covert aid
	1988	\$350	Aid decreased
<b>Phase III</b>	1989	\$350	Covert aid
	1990	\$300	Aid decreased
	1991	None	Aid ended

American aid to the rebels in Afghanistan was an integral component of a larger *secret* strategy by high-ranking members of the Reagan administration to win the Cold War<sup>77</sup> and in bi-partisanship with the Congress played, who played a significant policy making role as well. Despite its appearances to the observer, however, there was not a major, coordinated program of aid enacted until President Reagan came to office. Within the Reagan administration, CIA Director Casey assumed the leadership of policy making prior to 1985, and he and Secretary of State Shultz drove administration decisions after 1985. Key decisions between 1979 and 1986 created an increasingly potent American aid program that first sustained the resistance and then provided it with the means to strike back at the Soviets. Beginning slowly, this aid mushroomed from \$30 million in 1980 to as much as \$500 million in 1986 and 1987, dropping steadily year after year until all funding was cut in 1991 (see Table 2). When combined with US support for Pakistan and the contributions of other countries (especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia), the overall commitment to the mujaheddin was quite impressive and simply dwarfs the other cases in which the Reagan Doctrine was applied. According to the Pakistani general in charge of much of the program, the rebels "would have lost" without US aid; "CIA aid necessary and critical" in the Soviet defeat.

<sup>77</sup> Schweizer, Peter. *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994) xi.



The application of the Reagan Doctrine turned Afghanistan into the USSR's own "Vietnam" and hastened the dramatic reevaluation of Soviet foreign policy by Mikhail Gorbachev. Moreover, as Casey had predicted it would, the Afghan debacle contributed to internal changes within the Soviet Union "creating cracks in the system."<sup>78</sup>

The application of the Reagan Doctrine mired the Soviet Union in a guerrilla war that grew increasingly expensive in money, material, and lives. In particular, US decisions in 1985 and 1986 made it plain to Soviet leaders that victory was not possible without a dramatically greater commitment in time, effort, and cost. Beginning in 1987 US force through the Reagan Doctrine—enabled a diplomatic breakthrough with Moscow clearly capitulated in the UN-led negotiations, seeking only international cover for its withdrawal.<sup>79</sup>

### Unintended Consequences of the Reagan Doctrine

First, the failure of many policy makers to recognize victory when it was in hand stands out as the most significant weakness revealed by the post-1988 application of the Reagan Doctrine. The objective of the policy, outlined in NSDD, was to force the Soviets to withdrawal from Afghanistan. However, when this was achieved, US leaders did not stop aid but continued to apply the Reagan Doctrine to the internal civil war, which would produce less clear results.

Another weakness in this US policy centers on the decision to target the most radical factions of the mujaheddin as the primary recipients of aid with only the short term gains of *harassing* the Soviets in mind. In the long run, this tact may have created new policy problems for the United States. The advanced US-made Stinger missile is one aid item which continues to haunt American analysts today. Many of the Stinger SAMs delivered to the mujaheddin have found their way out of Afghanistan. At least one truck load found its way into the hands of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards<sup>80</sup>, and the CIA actually started a program called MIAS (Missing in Action Stingers) to try to get some sort of accounting.<sup>81</sup> US officials fear that they might find their way into the hands of a state sponsored terror group to target at leisure a civilian aircraft. Likewise, the mujaheddin following Osama bin Laden in his *jihad* against the

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<sup>78</sup> Woodward, 236

<sup>79</sup> Cordovez, 219-220.

<sup>80</sup> Cooley, *Payback*, 149

<sup>81</sup> Cooley, *Unholy Wars*, 173. It is worth noting, however, that the battery life (internal power source) of these Stinger missiles is over 15 years as of this writing. Without replacement parts they may be rendered useless in a few more years— if not already so.

US certainly have some of these advanced weapons in their possession. Even the Russians still fear facing Stinger missiles once again as dissident regions such as Chechnya attempt to purchase these weapons on the black market.<sup>82</sup>

In sum, the Reagan doctrine, as it was applied in Afghanistan during the 1980s, was a successful approach to the regional conflict involving the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, and indirectly Pakistan. However, its usefulness to US foreign policy goals shifted due to two when the mujaheddin factions transformed hostilities into an internecine civil war and also sided against their main financier—the United States.

US funding for the resistance, filtered through Pakistan's ISI, went to the construction and operation of several resistance training camps in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>83</sup> Given only cursory visits on a few remote occasions during the entire war, the US—and more specifically the CIA—had no idea of the real extent of the training going on. Upon the Soviet's withdrawal in 1989 and our eventual suspension of aid in 1992, these camps found new funding from Osama bin Laden. A wealthy Saudi Arab expatriate who had fought on the front lines with the mujaheddin and actively recruited many Muslims globally into the mujaheddin ranks has now declared "jihad" upon the rebels' former supporter—the United States. Through some of the resourcing provided by the Reagan Doctrine, bin Laden now funds training and operations of several Islamic extremist groups like the Abu Sayyaf Group and International Islamic Brigade in his war against the West.<sup>84</sup> Dramatic terrorist bombings like the 1993 World Trade Center in New York, the 1996 US military barracks at Khobar Towers, Saudi Arabia, and the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998—among several others—have all been linked to bin Laden's terrorist organization.<sup>85</sup> Despite President Clinton's cruise missile strikes on some of Osama bin Laden's Afghan camps, he is still at large and an acknowledged threat, predicating US forces both overseas and at home to remain in "Threat Condition Alpha"<sup>86</sup> to this date.

## Conclusion

US foreign policy toward Afghanistan played out over 14 years and three presidents. Carter initiated the policy break with the old US-USSR détente, declaring the security of the Persian Gulf region as a vital national interest and specifically naming the Afghan mujaheddin "freedom fighters" deserving of US support. Under the presidential terms

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<sup>82</sup> Bodansky, Yosset, *Bin Laden, The Man Who Declared War on America*. (Rocklin, California: Prima Publishing, 1999) 328-329. Codey *Unholy Wars*, 176-177.

<sup>83</sup> Bodansky, x-x, 71-22, 49; Yousaf, 82-85.

<sup>84</sup> Jane's Intelligence Review, "Bin Laden's Network" *Middle East Section, Jane's Information Group Limited* (Lexis-Nexis, 1 Dec 1998) vol 5, no 12:6.

<sup>85</sup> Bodansky, 231-233.

<sup>86</sup> *In short*, Threat Condition Alpha is a security posture of heightened caution and vigil, impacting some normal functions of units and facilities worldwide.

of Reagan and Bush, the Reagan Doctrine was evolved, becoming the framework upon which US foreign policy would respond to Cold War communist encroachment. In Afghanistan this doctrine evolved over three phases

- *Phase I (1980-1984):* Reagan adoption of Carter Doctrine stance; increasing aid to harass the Soviets.
- *Phase II (1985-1988):* Key decisions escalate US coercive diplomacy to force Soviet troops to withdrawal from Afghanistan.
  - 1985: Major funding and equipment increases to Afghani rebels
  - 1986: Introduction of Stinger missiles and training to mujaheddin
  - 1988: Geneva Accords signed in which Moscow agrees to withdrawal forces
- *Phase III (1989-1992):* Soviet troops withdrawal, but indirect aid continues to PDPA and the US, under congressional pressures, continues to support mujaheddin. Interest in supporting the mujaheddin in its civil war diminished with the failure of the AIG to form a viable democratic alternative to the PDPA and the US focus on Iraq and the Gulf War in 1990-1991. Policy interest ends with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War, returning policy interest to the limbo-land it languished in prior to 1979.<sup>87</sup>

The end of the communist Soviet Union certainly came as a shocking surprise to Western analysts. Although the Reagan Doctrine and its successful application in Afghanistan was certainly not the critical factor in Moscow's death, it certainly was a factor in the equation. Likewise, today—ten years after Soviet withdrawal—Afghanistan is still embroiled in civil war with the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban controlling upward of ninety percent of the country. Unforeseen by policymakers of the 1980s was the possibility that the weapons, equipment, and training the US funded would be turned against it by mujaheddin factions as profoundly as it has been to date. Osama bin Laden and his mujaheddin groups, in their private jihad against the United States, are alleged to have had a hand in several recent terrorist attacks upon Americans, including the devastating embassy bombings in Nairobi, Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.

In sum, of all the Reagan Doctrine cases which occurred during the 1980s, Afghanistan epitomizes all the spirit and elements of the doctrine in action, stands as its cornerstone in history. The demise of the Cold War precipitated the demise of the Reagan Doctrine—without the strategic threat of Communist expansion of the Soviet Union the

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<sup>87</sup> Lenczowski, 227

foundations of the doctrine were nulled. As conceived, the doctrine proposed action to counter perceived Soviet expansion and to "go on the offensive with a forward strategy of freedom."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Reagan, Speech at Heritage Foundation Dinner, 1983. (Lexis-Nexis).



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